

An interview with Sister Georgiana Terstegge

SISTER GEORGIANA TERSTEGGE

An Interview Conducted by

Sr. Ann Kathleen Brawley

April 27, 1981

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NARRATOR DATA SHEET

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DATE

Name of narrator: Sister Georgiana TersteggeAddress: St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana Phone: Birthdate: 12/02/05 Birthplace: Terre Haute, INLength of residence in Terre Haute:

Education: St. Joseph's Academy, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College,
Indiana University (Bloomington), Master's degree in French;
Catholic University (Washington, D.C.), Doctor's degree in French.
Occupational history: Teacher.

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SISTER GEORGIANA TERSTEGGE

Tape 1

April 27, 1981

INTERVIEWER: Sister Ann Kathleen Brawley

TRANSCRIBER: Kathleen M. Skelly

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AKB: /I am talking with/ Sister Georgiana Terstegge of St. Mary of the Woods. I am Sister Ann Kathleen Brawley, the archivist and historian of the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary of the Woods.

Sr. Georgiana, would you tell us a little bit about your family history: (1) when you were born and where were you born?

GEORGIANA: Yes, I was born December 2nd, 1905, in Terre Haute, Indiana. I'm the third of seven children. I suppose I should say, six, because one was born dead. But I was the third one. Well, my father was born in Effingham, Illinois; my mother in Teutopolis. They met in Effingham and came to Terre Haute right after their marriage, really, because they didn't want to speak German the rest of their lives (laughs). They wanted to come and speak English. So they settled down in Terre Haute. My father was a pharmacist and got a job right away, and then we've lived in Terre Haute all our lives.

AKB: All the children were born in Terre Haute?

GEORGIANA: All the children were born in Terre Haute, right.

AKB: Were your parents natives of this country or were they born in Europe?

GEORGIANA: Yes, my parents were natives of this country, but my father's parents were born in Germany. And my mother's grandparents were born in Germany. So, although they had a good German background, they just didn't want to talk German all their lives in Effingham and Teutopolis. That was really the reason why they came. I'm sorry now because, you know, I could have learned German easily, right there at home because they could speak it, you know. They just didn't want to. Every time they'd

GEORGIANA: see us, they'd say, "Pas auf, der kinder!" Then they'd speak in German so we wouldn't hear what they were saying. (laughing)

AKB: Sister, how did you become so interested in French, or was that in the community /Sisters of Providence/ that you were motivated toward that /French/?

GEORGIANA: No, that was before I came to community. I went to St. Joseph's high school -- St. Joseph's Academy -- and I was in the third year and intending to come to St. Mary of the Woods novitiate. But I didn't really know what I was going to do. I had no idea what I was going to do. In those days, you know, we didn't ask; and I really didn't have any thought. But it was the third year and we were three weeks into school and I had not begun any French. I had Latin, in freshman, sophomore year. And I was, you know, intending to take Latin the four years, which I did. But in this third year I could hear them /reciting French/ in the room next door. We had only two rooms in that high school, but good teaching. Very good teaching, but not very good equipment. Two rooms. And in the second room I could hear them conjugating French verbs. And it was so musical. Oh, I thought I had to have it; I couldn't live if I didn't learn French. So, after three weeks, I bought the book on my way to school, with nobody's permission. (laughs) I took it to the sister and asked her if I could drop bookkeeping and take French. She said, "Well, if you make up the work." And I said, "Oh, I'll make it up." And I did. So, then I took it in this junior year and the senior year.

And when I came to St. Mary's not long after that, I, of course, thought that would be the end of French; /I/ never thought I would ever have another French lesson. But in the novitiate, we did have a little French, not too much though. And then we went out on mission as novices. I was there a year-and-a-half before I went out on mission, and it just so happened that they needed a French teacher. I kept about ten pages ahead of the students (laughs). I was supposed to be an art teacher. I was taking art, too, and so they told

GEORGIANA: me that in five years I would be an art teacher. But in the meantime, I was to help teaching French. Well, I got my degree, you know, from St. Mary of the Woods as a professed Sister, my A.B.

Then I went to Indiana University for four summers . . . no, one semester and three summers. That was it. Got my master's and then later on . . .

AKB: Master's in what?

GEORGIANA: In French.

AKB: In French.

GEORGIANA: In French, yes. Both of them were in French. And then I went to Catholic University /Washington, D.C./ . That's where I got the doctorate in French.

AKB: Very good.

Sister, what led you to become interested in St. Mary of the Woods? Now, I know one of your sisters became a religious, but she followed you, didn't she?

GEORGIANA: No. One preceded me and one followed.

AKB: Oh, all right.

GEORGIANA: There were three of us.

Yes, Sister Juliana was the oldest in the family. She had come over here when she was 15 (I was still in high school) and . . . no, I wasn't even in high school yet at that time.

But anyway, I was taught by the Sisters of Providence because the Sisters of Providence had all the schools in Terre Haute at that time. So I was taught by them and I loved them and I felt drawn to religious life and I never thought of any other community.

AKB: How did you travel back and forth to see Sister Juliana?

GEORGIANA: Oh, that was good. We had an interurban car.

GEORGIANA: We didn't have an automobile, but we had the interurban car. And the car ran every hour on the hour. I'm telling you they were so prompt and they were so swift. I think it was ideal, really. We got the interurban car and came straight over to St. Mary of the Woods and visited my sister, Juliana.

This interurban car went in all directions. It went north. We had relatives in North Terre Haute. We would go there frequently. Sometimes it would even go to Paris, though I never did go to Paris, Illinois, in those days. /One could even go to Buffalo, New York, on the interurban, by simply changing in different cities along the way./

There was something else that we had, you know, besides the interurban. We had the little local streetcars, which weren't bad at all.

AKB: They followed on tracks, didn't they?

GEORGIANA: Oh, yes. They followed on tracks. They had a trolley.

AKB: Well, did the interurban and those streetcars use the same tracks?

GEORGIANA: Yes, they did. The interurban went farther. Their tracks went farther. The interurban car had its terminal /in Terre Haute/ about 8th Street and Wabash. The terminal is still there -- 8th and Wabash.

AKB: Oh, that was the terminal . . .

GEORGIANA: That was the terminal.

AKB: . . . for the interurban?

GEORGIANA: That's right. And the interurban had to use the tracks for the regular streetcars, you know, to get out of the city.

AKB: How did it get out here?

GEORGIANA: The tracks continued from Terre Haute on here. The tracks were all along the grade there. You know where that grade is as you come along

GEORGIANA: here? It was on the other side of the road. Paris Avenue, around there, I guess you'd call it.

AKB: Oh, I see.

GEORGIANA: But the tracks just continued. That was all. They went on to Paris, Illinois.

AKB: Did the train not come out here closer to St. Mary of the Woods? I thought it did.

GEORGIANA: You mean the railroad train?

AKB: No. The interurban.

GEORGIANA: The interurban car was . . . well, I can't remember just now. It was outside our gates. It was very close to the railroad track out there. Very close.

AKB: But it did not use the regular railroad tracks?

GEORGIANA: No, no. Oh, no. It had its own tracks and it was close to the railroad. The interurban car had a trolley, too. These tracks, as I think of them now, were parallel to the railroad track, but they were closer to St. Mary's than the railroad tracks are, which are still there. And the little stop sign or stop, whatever it was, was right close to our gates.

AKB: How did you return to Terre Haute? Did they come back on a regular basis, too?

GEORGIANA: Oh, yes. They came back and we just took the interurban car back. It really was good. It was on the hour. That's what's so remarkable, always on the hour.

AKB: We could profit by that today, could we not?

GEORGIANA: Oh, we sure could!

AKB: Sister, what are some of the most important changes in Terre Haute that you have witnessed during your lifetime?

GEORGIANA: All right.

Well, do you want me to tell you a little bit more about that train?

AKB: Go right ahead. Go right ahead.

GEORGIANA: This was something interesting.

Not only did we have the little streetcar, the local streetcars which were very good and which went all over the city, but we also had what they call a jitney bus. Now it was an old Ford. It looked like a Model-T. They were ordinary cars. They could hold really five people, but sometimes seven and eight (laughing) got in. I don't know how they did it. I often took that to school to St. Joseph's. I took my bicycle many a time, but then I also took the streetcar, and then frequently I took this jitney bus. It was only a nickel, and they stopped at various stops. For me it was 13th and Locust, so I'd go over there and get in a jitney bus and go all the way to . . . I think they stopped at about maybe five or six places on Wabash Avenue. Then we got out and walked the rest of the way. But the old jitney bus is something some people don't know about.

AKB: Oh! I didn't know about it.

GEORGIANA: Now, what else did you ask me, some changes?

AKB: No, I asked you, Sister, what were some of the changes in Terre Haute that you have witnessed during your lifetime?

GEORGIANA: So many. So very, very many.

First of all, when I was a child . . . of course, remember I was only there 18 years. I left home when I was 18 /1923/. And in those first 18 years, life was very quiet and smooth; and I would say that life in Terre Haute, the economy was prosperous. You see they had the railroads going, and they had the brewery, and they had coal mines and /a steel mill and a glass factory, and a paper mill/.

GEORGIANA: Business was good. We were never rich by any means, but we didn't think of ourselves as poor either. And things were very quiet and peaceful.

Then, of course, came the first World War and I was still home for that. And that disrupted everything.

But then about the changes in Terre Haute. Well, it seems to me now that everything happened all at once when it began to go down. Because even though I left in 1924, I was at St. Mary's and frequently would go back and forth and I could see. I think up to 1940 things were good, but we had three terrible fires on Wabash Avenue, two of them at 5th and Wabash.

One of them was long before my time, but it left a mark, and that was at 5th and Wabash. That was the Havens-Geddes fire. It was called the Havens-Geddes /because that was the name of the/ great big department store at 5th and Wabash, and the fire just wiped out that whole corner. And there was an 18-year-old boy who burned to death in that. He was a real hero. I forget his name now /Claude Herbert/, but anyway that was before my time. But I read all about it. That was at 5th and Wabash.

Then when I was a child, they had a fire at Lederer and Feibelman /in 1921 or '22/. That was between 6th and 7th Street on the north side. And that just wiped out several great big buildings.

Then Herz went out of business and Alden went into business and then went out of business. /Schloss, Kleeman's, Sears & Roebuck, Valentine's drugstore and others closed, and it seems to me that from then on, things began to go down. And I really do think that the reason for that was because people could not park. By that time, cars were coming in. When they had the streetcars, it was all right. You could get off and go and shop. Go back and get the streetcar -- every block.

But when they began to use cars and would come downtown, you know, they couldn't park.

GEORGIANA: And I think from then on, the parking problem has been one of the biggest things in the downgrading of downtown and its decline. People just don't go shopping there because they cannot park or they'd have to pay to park. They didn't mind paying as long as they could find a place. The buildings went. People went out of business. The stores suffered very much; I'm sure they did. And then, one after another the stores closed. And the big things . . . the railroads went out. They took down the railroad terminal, the good old Union Station. And then they took down the Rose Dispensary building and one big landmark after another. To me now, it's just like a bombed out city. That's what it looks like. And it breaks my heart, really.

AKB: Have there been any changes in the downtown area that you would consider good?

GEORGIANA: Yes. You mean the changes there?

AKB: Yes.

GEORGIANA: Well, I think that from 7th on to 6th has been very, very good until recently. Now that they've taken down Root's and those other buildings on the corner of 6th, nothing has been put up there. And even the sign that said "we're going up" has now been taken down. And people don't seem to know what's going to happen, if anything.

AKB: Sister, what would you like to see happen really to the downtown area?

GEORGIANA: Oh, my! I would love to see it bustling and hustling again with business. I would love to see people there walking the way they used to -- back and forth -- people buying things and having a place to buy things and having a place to talk. I would love to see downtown a thriving business center with many of these professional offices that they have been talking about. But I still would like to see it a business center, because I think it is the core of the city. It has the history. It has that through street, I mean avenue, all the way through -- the old U.S. 40,

GEORGIANA. the National Highway. And I just would like to see it come to life again. I think it's dead.

AKB: Well, we have Hulman Civic Center in Terre Haute, but there, too, parking is still a problem. As we look at the Terre Haute area now even with many of those buildings razed, the only kind of parking would be multi-level parking; and that's always more difficult for people than, you know, the parking lots such as we have out at the shopping centers. To me, it seems that there's always going to be a problem, though not as much if they could get some of the multi-level parking.

GEORGIANA: That's right. I agree, Sister, with all my heart. They need several multi-level parking places. And they need them close to the core of those stores where the mall is going to be, if they will have a mall. I would love to see a mall there on a smaller scale, of course, than Honey Creek. And I would love to see on each side of the two main department stores, maybe a two-story parking facility -- or three at most -- but close enough so that people could go there and could park and could be allowed reasonable time and reasonable walking space (they wouldn't have to go too far). They have to have parking or they'll never do anything there.

Yes, in addition to the business idea, I would like to see downtown a theater -- a good theater -- or a movie or both, and some good restaurants. I would like to see one very good restaurant downtown. I don't know why we can't have . . . with the name of Terre Haute, I don't see why we can't have one good French restaurant. (laughs) Anyway, I'd like to see some good ones where people can shop there and stop and be entertained and can eat there and go home. And the place would come to life again.

Now, I think that the bank building that still stands there would make a beautiful restaurant. I did want Carl Wolf building to be a restaurant. I thought it would be lovely because it has a balcony, but it's gone now and they're using it for something else. The bank, however,

GEORGIANA: could be turned into a restaurant if they build a new bank.

Then, I think that . . . I'd love to see a park downtown, too. A nice public park. They surely could put one . . . maybe they could put it on 3rd and Wabash where they took that old furniture /hardware/ store down. That would make a nice place for a public park. A welcome to the city. It would be beautiful for people to have that as an entrance. So, you know, there are many, many things I'd love to see happen downtown to bring it to life again.

AKB: Sr. Georgiana, you've long been a student of the history of the establishment of the Sisters of Providence and the academy here at St. Mary of the Woods in 1840 and of the fact that we received our charter in 1846, making us the oldest Catholic boarding school for young women in Indiana. And you taught here ever since receiving your doctorate in French from Catholic University. Can you tell me some of the changes in the curriculum -- in the French department in particular -- at St. Mary's that you've noted over the years?

GEORGIANA: All right.

Suppose I take the French department first.

AKB: Surely.

GEORGIANA: All right. Let's see.

When I started to teach over there in French, it was mostly the type of the parlor education. They were thinking of using French. Not many girls traveled at that time, and they didn't expect to use the language, but they certainly learned it. And we taught them the grammatical method, which was a very good foundation and very necessary. And we had time; somehow or other, they had more time then. We would put on plays (sometimes they were just skits, sometimes they were classical plays) in full costume, with everything memorized. When I think of it, they wouldn't begin to get them to do that now. Too many other outside activities!

GEORGIANA: But we did do that.

Then as the years went on, I did try to make it a spoken language because, you know, of my insatiable love for French. I just wanted to hear it. I wanted to teach them to love to hear it also. And so I did try more and more to make it of a conversational nature. Then we began to get the girls interested in going to France. We had quite a few . . . maybe one or two every year would go to France for a whole year. Then we had some to go for just a semester. They would go to Angers or to Paris, and once three went to the Sorbonne. Two of those girls, by the way, got a degree from the Sorbonne. It is very unusual for an American, mind you, to get a master's from the Sorbonne.

And then I got to go myself, and that was the thrilling part of it. In 1955, I went for one summer. That was the first time I got to France. At that time I went to the Institut Catholique. Then I went to our motherhouse /at Ruille-sur-Loir/. And I had a very, very thrilling summer.

That was the first of my five trips to France. In 1961 was the second. And in 1967 to '68 I had the good luck to have an exchange with one of our sisters in France. Sister Yves Joseph came over here and took the classes in the college, and I went over there and took her classes teaching English and living at the motherhouse. A wonderful year.

The next summer I went by myself, and that time I got to go to the Sorbonne. I was always dying to try it out. So I took three courses at the Sorbonne that summer, living at Malakoff with our sisters.

The next year, in 1970, I took our own sisters to France, eight of them. That was the beginning, you know, of the Maison française /French house/ for all of the Sisters of Providence who taught French. First we had it at Indianapolis. That was in 1968. It was the summer when I got

GEORGIANA: back from France, and they let us have a whole convent that summer, and we turned it into a French house. We had rules that we had to speak French all the time. There were about 20 sisters there, all Sisters of Providence.

Then we got the idea that it would be beautiful if we could take them all to France. Well, they didn't all want to go; they all couldn't go; but we got the permission to take as many as wanted to go and so there were nine of us. We saved every penny that we got, and in 1970 we went to France and stayed almost three months there. We traveled; we got Eurail passes, and we traveled all around to Italy and Germany, Switzerland, Spain and so on. But we stayed most of the time at the French mother-house, and we took a course there from the sisters. That was tremendous, you know, for all the sisters.

Then when I came back, 1971 (I mean at the end of that summer) and took up the French again in the college, I had some refresher courses, you might call them, whatever they were, a new impetus. And that was when I began to get interested in beginning something new in the French department.

Up to then, we had had just two major sequences in the French department. One was for the general education and required 32 hours, credit hours. Then we also had the educational where they would prepare the students to teach French. That required 40 credit hours.

It was then that I began this translation course, because I had gone myself to Washington, D.C., where they were having this accreditation for translation. It's a national society called the American Translators Association. I took the examination to see what it would be like and luckily passed it. So then I became accredited and I could grant accreditation to others.

When I came back to the college, I put in this translation course. Today we have it in

- GEORGIANA: both French and Spanish departments. Students don't have to take the accreditation examination, but they can. We prepare them for it. If they take it, they would have to take it at some center. I can give it here. Even so, the test has to go through headquarters, and the students have to become members of The American Association of Translators. It's a little difficult to get in. Really it is, but we have had five in the French department who have become accredited. And today, right now, we are having several in the Spanish try for it.
- AKB: Is this an option that's open . . .
- GEORGIANA: It's an option.
- AKB: . . . to every student . . .
- GEORGIANA: That's right.
- AKB: . . . if she shows the proficiency which would qualify her to . . .
- GEORGIANA: That's right, Sister.
- AKB. . . . enter it.
- GEORGIANA: That's right. And it has something to do with the career orientation, too, because I wanted them to see that they could really do something with the French. I wrote to Dimension Publishers and asked them if they had a book that we could translate in the class as a project. And we offered to take the minimum price, you know, minimum payment. So they sent us a book, and this class translated it and received a check for \$400 at the end of the translations. Each one got her share, \$4 a page. So it was good practice, very good. It showed them, you see, that there is a future in it.
- AKB: This trend toward career orientation has really, then modified your curriculum in the French department.
- GEORGIANA: Quite a bit, Sister. Yes, quite a bit. They all seem to want to do something now with

GEORGIANA: the French. More people travel now, too. But they really want to do something with it; and the translation course, I think, is popular I would say in both French and Spanish.

AKB: Sister, this gets back to the college itself, not necessarily the French department, but how heavily did and does St. Mary of the Woods rely on Terre Haute for students?

GEORGIANA: Well, I don't think it relies very much, Sister. I think that those students who want to go to day school, see, can go to ISU. But whatever students we do have (there're not too many) from Terre Haute are all boarders here on the campus. Yes, yes. They don't commute. As far as I know, they don't. I don't think we have more than 10 or 12, but they are boarders.

AKB: You mean there are 10 or 12 who would commute back and forth?

GEORGIANA: They could but they stay on campus. They go home weekends, of course, you know.

AKB: Do you think the lack of any kind of transportation between Terre Haute and St. Mary of the Woods contributes to this?

GEORGIANA: Surely, I think so. I think if we had good transportation, we would have more girls coming back and forth.

AKB: Even in the early days of the community and St. Mary of the Wood, you know, prior to the college, even in the academy days, did we have many girls from Terre Haute? If not, why do you think they did not come out here?

GEORGIANA: We must have had . . . of course . . . I remember when I was a student there in the academy in Terre Haute, we had St. Mary's girls come out for practice teaching; and I remember how we looked up to them. Oh, we thought they were wonderful. They went back and forth a great deal, I think, at that time.

I remember hearing some people say we can

GEORGIANA: always tell when the girls are from St. Mary's, you know, we can always tell. They were so well dressed, well groomed and so polite. I don't think that they could say that (laughing) today. I'm afraid not. They go in their blue jeans, ooooooohh!

AKB: Well, do you think, too, that one of the reasons they did not come out to the academy would have been the fact that we had St. Joseph's Academy? Prior to that, in that very same area, 'way back in Mother Theodore's time they had the Old St. Joseph's which was called St. Vincent's Academy. I believe St. Patrick's had a high school for girls. So, I would imagine that many of the girls from Terre Haute who wanted to have a private education, or education in a private high school, would have gone to those schools in preference to making the trip out here to St. Mary of the Woods Academy. The Sisters of Providence staffed all of them.

GEORGIANA: That's right.

AKB: Do you think that would have been a factor?

GEORGIANA: Yes, I think so, Sister. I'm trying to think. Now, what was the date when they closed the academy at St. Mary's? Was it . . . 1930 some, wasn't it? 'Thirty-four?

AKB: It was in the '30s and they opened . . .

GEORGIANA: Schulte /High School/. When did they have Schulte?

AKB: Well, Schulte was later than that. But Ladywood /High School, Indianapolis/. Ladywood really replaced the academy as a boarding school.

GEORGIANA: That's right.

AKB: The schools in Terre Haute I do not think had boarders at first. Some of them did, you know; they had a few boarders . . .

GEORGIANA: In the early days?

AKB: . . . but I don't think it was considered a regular thing at all that the girls boarded

AKB: because they were close enough that they could have gone back and forth.

GEORGIANA: That's right. And don't you think, too, that many times girls want to go away to school?

AKB. Um hm. If the parents can afford to send them, too.

On campus, what changes during your time at St. Mary of the Woods College took place in regard to the rules and discipline which controlled campus life?

GEORGIANA: Very good. Sister, before I answer that question would you want me to say a few more things about changes in the curricula now?

AKB: Surely.

GEORGIANA: Now that we are getting to think about careers more, there have been quite a few changes. There are many more majors that have been introduced in the college. There's pre-law and pre-med, and there's business. They built up the business department. We have the computer /program/ in the science /department/, and we have a number of new courses. And now they're revamping the English course. They're going to have Writing I, II, III, and IV. Three and IV will be for honor students; I and II will be, particularly I, will be for the ELI /English Language Institute/ students -- for the international students whose knowledge of English is very small, you know; so that will be for them.

Then we also have a number of other courses. I think the emphasis on business marketing and management and computerization, all that, is very strong right now.

Also, the idea of international /education/. See, they're getting this feeling that they want to get more international students. We're going to get Japanese students here. Then we have the W.E.D./Women's External Degree/ program which has certainly made a big change, I think, in the college.

AKB: What about the Education department? At one

AKB: time there was an excellent enrollment . . .

GEORGIANA: Yes, I know.

AKB: . . . in both elementary and secondary education. Does that still hold true?

GEORGIANA: I don't think it is in elementary, Sister. It's good, but I don't think it is quite as famous as it was at one time. I know it's good. But I think the secondary education major is very strong. Very strong. Even though, chances for teaching in elementary and in secondary schools don't seem too bright right now, there are opportunities. But they hear so many people say that the pupils are unruly and it's very difficult to teach them. And the salary isn't that good. You would think there would be a great deal of discouragement there, but apparently it isn't too great. Some of our students . . . I know some of them personally who are very successful as teachers.

Now then you asked me about the changes in . . .

AKB: Yes. About the changes in campus life and the regulations that controlled campus life. You know, I'm quite sure that we were considered much more demanding in regard to discipline and so on . . .

GEORGIANA: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

AKB: . . . but I'm certain there have been changes over the years. They would have to have come about, because I'm sure that young women today would not submit to those changes. But how do you see them changing?

GEORGIANA: Well, I go back to the time when I was there, you know, on duty every night, or almost every night. We had quiet hour from 7 to 8, and during that quiet hour the doors were open. The students could not write letters. There was perfect silence; nobody had a radio on; they were studying. They must. They had to study. That was 7 to 8 /p.m./.

Then they had this long social hour from 8 to 9. At 9 o'clock we went around and checked

GEORGIANA: their rooms. Everybody had to be in her room at 9 o'clock to be checked in. Then she could go and do other things. But still we didn't have any visiting hours between 9 and 10 without permission. So, 9 to 10 was the time when we paraded the halls. We had two Sisters on each hall.

At 10 o'clock, lights out. And, of course, /we could/ tell a lot of funny stories about that, you know. And they do, too, now. The alumnae when they come, laugh about it. But they loved it somehow or other. They loved to get caught, too. (laughs)

One time there was a very unusual silence in the room at 10 o'clock when I checked this room, and I felt that there was something going on. So I tapped on the door and then I opened it. A girl stood there, and I think I must have seen about 30 girls in that room, or suite. I said, "Well, I'll just have to take down your names." And they said, "Here, Sister." And they handed me a list of their names. They were all ready to (laughs) give them. I think they wanted to get caught. They were campused or something, I don't remember. It wasn't too much.

But we did have discipline. Believe me, we did!

Then also, of course, the pleasures were much simpler. They had so many pleasures on campus. Today they have so many pleasures off campus or they have other people coming in on campus. There's something doing all the time now.

Even though I think we were very tired, we felt we had quiet hour all the time, and we had night duty. And we had to get up early. Even though we were tired then, I don't think we were as tired as the teachers are now, because there're so many outside activities. And they seem to be going, going, going or doing something all the time. They have concerts and programs and meetings and you name it.

AKB: They do have it.

AKB: Were there any particular regulations in regard to, for instance, young men coming to visit on campus?

GEORGIANA: Oh, yes. Oh, absolutely! They had week-end privilege and the men came, and their hours were definitely regulated. And the places of meeting were definitely regulated, right. They never thought of such a thing as visitation -- what they call "visitation hours" where boys would come into the dorm. [They] never dreamt of such a thing! Never.

AKB: What about the dining hall? Were there special regulations in regard to that? And might the girls bring their gentlemen guests to the dining room?

GEORGIANA: No. There was a time when that was no man's land. (laughs)

AKB: Literally no man's land!

GEORGIANA: Literally no man's land. We never bought a . . . imagine having a man in there!

And, of course, that's completely different today. And neither did girls ever go in there with their hair in kid curlers or curlers. Never, never, never. They came dressed up. They even had some sort of uniform -- skirt . . . sweater and skirt, you know, shoes [loafers].

AKB: Oh, I didn't know they ever had uniforms at the college!

GEORGIANA: Oh, yes. Yes, yes. Sweater and skirt . . . it was not really considered a uniform because everybody did it, you know. Just like today everybody wears green . . . I mean, blue jeans. But it was a uniform.

Then, yes, Sister, of course, not as in the days of Mother Theodore, you know. They tell the story about when they went into the dining room then, the refectory . . . Oh, they had a girl reading. One was at the reader's stand ready to read as soon as the meal started. And then they

GEORGIANA: all had to bow as they came in -- a very deep bow -- to the sister who was presiding in the dining room.

Well, I remember, Sister, though . . . we didn't have that, but I remember when we had to preside in the dining room, too. At every meal, there was a sister presiding there. And this was beautiful. I'm sorry it's gone.

There were six girls at a table -- one senior, one junior, and the rest were sophomores or freshmen. And nobody ever went to a table without asking the senior first. Or if a sister or an older person -- a lay teacher -- would walk up to the table to say something to one of the girls, the whole table would stand. All six would stand. You don't see anything like that now.

AKB: Isn't that interesting?

GEORGIANA: It really is.

AKB. It showed a real respect.

GEORGIANA: Yes, it did. For the faculty. Yes, it did.

AKB: What about residence hall? Were there curfews? Did the girls have to be in /at a definite time/ if they were on dates in town?

GEORGIANA. That's right.

AKB: They had to have special permission from parents, I suppose, in order to go to town on a date?

GEORGIANA: That's right, exactly. They had /to have/ written permission.

AKB. I see.

GEORGIANA: And the one who was the dean . . .

AKB: And did they have to be in at a particular time?

GEORGIANA: That's right. They had to be in; it was

GEORGIANA: always about 10 or 11 o'clock. I don't remember. I didn't have to do that part of it. Sister Anne Berchmans was the dean at that time, you know, of the freshmen anyway. And I was always in freshman hall. But I know they had a set hour that they had to be in.

AKB: Were the regulations different for the freshmen than they were for the upper classmen?

GEORGIANA: Oh, very different, yes. And this is really funny, too, because when I was there -- for many years anyway -- the freshmen were never allowed to go in to the front door of Foley, mind you. They had to go around to the side door of Foley. Not until they were upperclassmen were they allowed to go into the front door of Foley.

AKB: Oh, my goodness!

GEORGIANA: Yes. And a freshman would never begin a song in the dining room without going up to the senior class president and getting permission. Oh, yes, they had a lot of distinction between classes, particularly between the freshmen and the upper-classmen.

AKB: The linking . . . what were some of the ceremonies that they had that were, you know, just peculiar to that era? The linking ceremony was one that I know, and they still talk about it.

GEORGIANA: Yes, it was so beautiful. And then they had the oak leaf crowning when they were received into the alumnae. And each one received a crown of oak leaves on her head, and they had a long procession.

Then they had May Day with all the stunts and fun, the gymnastic class.

AKB: And the crowning of the queen.

GEORGIANA: And the crowning of the May queen. We had the crowning of the May queen in the church, too. Remember?

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AKB: Yes. That was the crowning of the Blessed Virgin in the church.

GEORGIANA: The crowning of the Blessed Virgin in the church, that's right.

And . . . oh, yes, Varsity Night. They always had Varsity Night over at the gym. They had /lively/ class competition /such as/ basketball games. And on Varsity Night they always had skits and other little entertainment. They were very good. /And they had swimming matches and other sports./

Oh, this was interesting. Each class was responsible for one big social event for the whole school. The freshmen had the Christmas party. And that was really something! And I remember the girls said, "Sister, if you ever drop things, don't drop the Christmas party. Please keep that." But we couldn't because it had gotten too big, you know.

But anyway, the freshmen had the Christmas party. They entertained the whole school. The sophomores had Twelfth Night; right after Christmas they had a big entertainment. The juniors had St. Patrick's Day party and they'd entertain the whole school. And the seniors had the Mardi gras and the Valentine party. But they entertained . . . each class had one big day.

AKB: What did they do in regard to shopping trips? Could the girls get permission to go or did they have to have chaperones or what?

GEORGIANA: Well, long ago -- before my time -- they had chaperones. In Sister Gertrude's time (she could tell you a story, you know), the chaperone went along, but she didn't go shopping with them; she went into town with them and then she simply went someplace, I guess, and sat down. Maybe /she/ read something and went to a hotel lobby (laughs). She let them alone while they went shopping. Then she came back with them.

AKB. Oh, I see. It was more or less a case of taking them into town and going back after.

GEORGIANA: That's right.

AKB: I would think they could have had plenty of fun shopping.

GEORGIANA: I think so, too. One of them /chaperones/ was Miss Starkey, you know. She was the librarian here. And she went for years. But when I was there, they never had any chaperones that I can remember. But they didn't go shopping very much. See, there was a time we had Wednesday afternoon off, and then we had class Saturday morning. So they had Wednesday off and Saturday afternoon off, and that was the only time they would go shopping. But again the transportation problem, see?

AKB: Yes. Outside of the shopping trips did the girls have any connection with Terre Haute in regard to their social life? Did they have any kind of social life with, for instance, Indiana State or with Rose-Hulman?

GEORGIANA: I don't think they did, Sister. I don't believe they did, not in my time anyway. I've been out about six years. But in the last six years a lot of things have, you know, changed though. They have a great deal Now they have other schools coming; St. Joseph, Rensselaër, and others come for basketball games and socials. Notre Dame and Rose-Hulman boys came out to proms. Excuse me, I forgot to say that. Yes, yes.

The Prom was always a big thing. The spring prom. And the fall prom. They had two proms. The fall prom was the senior prom and then they had the Rose-Hulman boys out and the Notre Dame boys and /Boys/ from all over. Many a good marriage grew out of those times.

AKB: Well, I thought the girls frequently went to Notre Dame football games and so on.

GEORGIANA: They did. Yes, they did. You're right.

AKB: So, they really did have some connection with those . . . and with the boys' institutions . . .

GEORGIANA: Oh, yes, they did.

AKB: . . . you know, because Notre Dame was all boys at that time.

GEORGIANA: Oh, yes. That's right.

AKB: And, of course, Rose is still all boys.

GEORGIANA: That's right.

AKB: And Indiana State is now Indiana State University, and it was the Teachers College at that time.

GEORGIANA: That's true.

AKB: Sister Georgiana, is there anything else that you would like to say about your experiences at St. Mary of the Woods College? Do you have any more delightful little stories to share about your days at the Woods or any others that you know?

GEORGIANA: Well, let me see. I could say this. Every day was delightful. For sure, really. And, of course, there were lots of little stories that I think would be hard to just take out of context, you know, and bring them in here. But we used to have a lot of good times there.

I remember one time one girl -- and by the way, she has remained a faithful, loyal alumna and she's inviting me to Detroit next week or in two weeks but -- she was a freshman. And she called me in and said, "Sister, we want to ask you something." So I /thought/ what's going to happen? What was it about -- religion, politics, or what? I didn't know.

And a whole group of girls were sitting on the floor there, and they said we want to ask you something. I said, "All right. What do you want to ask me?"

You don't really love everybody the way you seem to, do you? You like all of us that way? You know we can't believe that. We think you must be putting on." It was very interesting.

And I said, "No. It's a fact; I really love you all."

GEORGIANA: So, we had lots of good times. And we had good feelings, very good feelings.

But of funny things that happened? Well, /there were/ those times when we'd catch them at night, you know. Oh, here's something funny! Yeah. This was the last day of school. I think I was a "meanie" that night. Somebody told me that they were going to have a party after nine. Now, this was the last day of school. You'd think we'd let them go but we wouldn't. I happened to be on the duty that night. So I told the other sisters who were on duty -- three of them -- /about/ the group that was going to have the party. We were going to nip it in the bud. We all took our positions, on the hall, one at each end of the fourth floor and one at each end of the third floor. And about ten o'clock when they should have been asleep (lights were supposed to be out -- lights were out, really), a door would open and a little head would peer out and then go back in again. And then pretty soon at the other end of the hall another door would open and a head would look out and go in again. And that went on for, oh, about an hour and a half. They were trying to come out. Well, they didn't do it. About one o'clock in the morning we stayed. They gave up. And we gave up at one o'clock.

The next day one of the girls told me that she had a great big cake, and they were going to have a party. They were going to get us in on it, too; (laughs) but we didn't let them do it. And to this day when I look at that girl, I think of the party that I spoiled. It was mean. (laughs)

AKB: Well, I'm sure many of them had parties that you didn't know anything about.

GEORGIANA: Oh, I'm sure they did.

AKB: Because I've heard them talk about their parties in their clothes closets and . . .

GEORGIANA: Oh, they did!

AKB: . . . and all the things that they did.
Sister, this is one question. Frequently, St. Mary

AKB: of the Woods was considered an institution for wealthy girls. Was that true?

GEORGIANA: No, I don't know how they got that reputation, Sister, except that there were a few . . .

END OF SIDE 1

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GEORGIANA: /There was one/ who later on became a sister.

Now, she had a suite of rooms for herself. She had two rooms and a bathroom. That suite today, on that northeast corner, has five students in it -- two in one room and three in another. So, she and a few others were exceptions. Several of them came and brought their horses along. Of course, today several of the girls have their horses, too. But in those days I suppose it was really something for them to have /a horse/. But I don't think that that was general by any means. And I don't know how we got that reputation that all the girls were wealthy here. I heard it, too.

AKB: I suppose that the tuition at a private institution such as ours would have been much more, for instance, per credit hour than those in public institutions, and because of the difference we would have been considered an institution to which one would have to be fairly wealthy to come.

GEORGIANA: That's right. Um hm.

AKB: Sister Georgiana, would you say a little bit more about the type of student that we have at St. Mary of the Woods College. I know that we do have a number of scholarships that are offered to young women, and there are many of them who are receiving student aid which probably will be affected in some way by the new . . . the Reagan policy in curtailing student aid. But I understand that it will not be a significant problem here. But also in regard to foreign students, have we not always had a tradition of foreign students here at St. Mary of the Woods.

GEORGIANA: Yes, we have, Sister. We've always had some. We've had them from Europe; we've had them from Germany; and we've had . . . not too many from

GEORGIANA: France, but from Germany. We had, certainly, some from Asia. We've had Chinese students; we've had Japanese students. And then we have had Koreans and Vietnamese. And they have always been good students, too. Really. And they blended very well into the curriculum, very well.

The E.L.I. students -- the English Language Institute -- which brings us students mostly from Venezuela and the Latin American countries has been difficult, I think. It had been very hard to get off the ground, but it is doing very well now because they are screening them a little bit better as to their serious intent to learn English. It's a six-month program, and then it goes on for another six months. I mean a new group comes in for a second six months. One group finishes at six months unless any individual in it wants to continue and if she's prepared to take the regular college course. And that has happened. And this year I think we have about eight or ten of them that are doing that. They are going on now with their regular college course.

But when I say that it was difficult to get off the ground, I think it's because they came and weren't well enough prepared. They knew no English whatsoever, none. And I remember one from Mexico. She didn't want to learn apparently. So she wasted a lot of time. Wasted the time of the teacher, too.

But they say that now they're not going to allow that to happen. They have to have some English, and they're particularly going to take care of that in this new writing program. Writing I, you know. They're going to have to have a seminar twice a week I think. It's going to be a very strenuous program perhaps, but anyway it's going to produce good results, I'm sure.

AKB: The primary purpose of the English Language Institute is to learn to speak the language.

GEORGIANA: That's it. Speak English. That's it. That's it exactly.

AKB: Whereas the other foreign students who came over here prior to the English Language Institute were young women who would have to have had enough English to be able to cope with a regular college program.

GEORGIANA: Right, that's right, Sister.

 And you know we're fortunate in having a very good language laboratory. And the English language Institute has provided many, many tapes. And with the constant practice that they get in this lab, you know, plus the practice with the teachers, they are making progress now. Very great progress.

AKB: All right.

 Sister, I have just one more question that I would like to ask you, and it really does not have anything to do with the curriculum at the college or St. Mary of the Woods College as such. May I ask, how did you become involved in the renovation program /the Architectural Commission of Terre Haute Civic Improvement, Inc., 1979-7/ in Terre Haute?

GEORGIANA: Aha! Well, that's interesting because first of all, it's my hometown. I love it.

 And secondly, when I saw it going down and I felt so bad about it, then all of a sudden a letter was written by Dr. John Logan. Did you know who Dr. John Logan is?

AKB: Yes.

GEORGIANA: He said that they were going to plan a renovation, a restoration of Terre Haute's downtown. Well, I was so thrilled that I sat down immediately and wrote him a letter of congratulations and encouragement. I didn't expect to get an answer. But when I got an answer from him, he said would you be on the program? (laughs)

AKB: Oh, I see.

GEORGIANA: That was it. So, of course, I couldn't say "no."

AKB: Well, of course, you've always had a tremendous interest in beautifying St. Mary of the Woods; and your tree program indicates that. How many trees have you planted at St. Mary of the Woods?

GEORGIANA: I know it's over 500. I'm sure it is. And pretty soon we will know for sure because we're going to put a name on each one of those trees. My brother is going to make nameplates for all of these trees -- little pieces of white aluminum with the name of the tree and the name of the donor in black print. In some cases, it's a whole class; in some cases, it's an individual. So we'll know pretty soon, but I'm sure it's over 500.

AKB: Are you trying to insure that we are still going to be St. Mary of the Woods . . .

GEORGIANA: Absolutely.

AKB: . . . as long as I see.

GEORGIANA: That's the point.

AKB: All right.

Well, thank you very much, Sister.

END OF TAPE

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